

Gentrification — in reverse

The Columbus Compact is pushing the Columbus Police Department to roust loiterers, malingers, and hanger-outers on East Main Street. Although the Columbus Compact acknowledges the district is safe, the Compact reasons that “nuisance” behaviors, including truancy, malingering, panhandling, loitering, ‘illegal’ prostitution, congregating juveniles and the like, create an atmosphere of “public disorder” which inhibits retail activity on the street.

Consequently, the Compact wants CPD to crack down on these crimes or almost-crimes employing obscure City ordinances that yield 4th degree misdemeanors and other citations if the miscreant can’t produce valid identifying paperwork. While they are at it, the Compact wants the City to rip out the pay-phones and remove the park benches affixed to the street.



Former South of Main properties located on East Main

More likely than not, the Columbus Compact is barking up the wrong tree. The Columbus Police Department is famously understaffed and overextended. Consequently, CPD targets its resources to minimize
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Community Properties: A good idea gone sour in practice

by Karen Mills

When CPO took over the Section 8 housing formerly owned by Broad Street Management we were told that CPO planned to be responsive and proactive in controlling problems with their buildings. Something Broad Street Management had never been.

In the beginning CPO was responsive; I was told their representatives would call on the tenants and let them know about the complaints being received and work to see that the actions resulting in the complaints ceased. As time passed the response slowed and the excuses started. I was very disappointed at hearing again about what couldn’t be done.

The off-duty Columbus Police Officers hired by CPO were instrumental in keeping things quiet in the neighborhood and remain instrumental today. The problem is that the few Officers that are working these

properties are stretched too thin to be effective.

Last year Community Properties moved the tenants out of the buildings in my neighborhood to rehab those buildings.

These buildings include:

40 - 42 Linwood Ave.

47 - 49 Linwood Ave.

The building that occupies the northeast corner of

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Linwood and Madison Avenues, and
97 - 99 Linwood Ave.

The neighborhood was blissfully quiet for most of that time renovation was taking place.

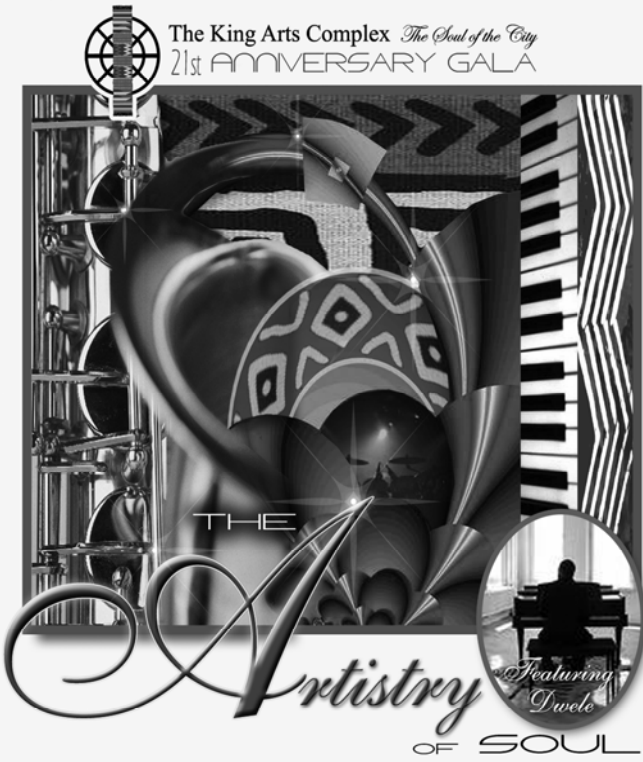
Once the rehabs were complete many of the same tenants were moved back in and the noise, traffic and illegal activity have resumed. I am expecting a summer of noise and aggravation again this year.

There are many more Community Properties on the Near East Side that home owners have problems with; the properties I have mentioned are just the buildings in my immediate vicinity that I know of personally.

I consider Community Properties to no longer be

communicating with me personally. They may be communicating with others in the area but not with me. I am not interested in being told what they "can't do" so my calls are no longer returned, my emails go unanswered.

Because I am a 20 year advocate for this neighborhood, I will once again write to Mayor Coleman, reminding him that Community Properties has strong political ties to the City Of Columbus and ask if there is not something he can do to facilitate action on the part of Community Properties and what I consider to be their responsibility to "our" community. I will also ask why the very detailed and restrictive lease that is required by tenants living in these buildings is not being enforced.



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Ex-offenders are directed to Main Street, but the checks from the State of Ohio are cashed in Hilliard.

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more serious offenses, especially violent crime. More than that, CPD has pushed (and been pushed by area residents) to place greater emphasis upon patrolling the many residential streets in the district in an effort to better secure the persons and the personal property associated with residential revitalization occurring all over the neighborhood.

At the end of the day, crime is WAY down from the fabled days in the 1980's and 1990's thanks to effective communication and the very healthy, if sometimes testy, collaboration between CPD's Strategic Response Bureau and the district's community and civic groups, most especially several Olde Towne East and South of Main block watch organizations.

But the Compact is right about one thing: the Main Street district and the Near East Side geography generally is a "containment" area where activities and

behaviors that typically are not tolerated in other districts are permitted to thrive. Said differently, the area is a "drop zone" for persons of disadvantage, whether by reason of economics, substance abuse, problematic personal history, or some other difficulty. And the area is a place where for decades public decision makers have installed the institutions that serve these persons. Clientele and service provider; the relationship is symbiotic and proximities make for value-added.

The politics of containment can take odd, perplexing, even wacky forms. Shortly before the turn of the century, the Department of Housing and Urban Development was in the early stages of implementing its Mark-to-Market program. Under Mark-to-Market, the owners of project based Section 8 properties became eligible to benefit from restructuring of their HUD-insured (FHA) debt and receive additional funds to improve the physical condition of their properties at favorable terms in exchange for accepting rent concessions and extending their Section 8 contracts with the federal government. An assessment of the physical condition of the properties and a review of the performance of the project's management were required to certify that the project was eligible for the program.

Certifying a project's eligibility includes a public meeting component which is open to tenants, neighbors, or any interested citizen. The day arrived for a public meeting regarding a modest-sized Section

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8 multifamily in the area. Although the residential property was not part of the notorious Broad Street Management portfolio, the meeting's location was the second floor of Broad Street Management's former office facility on East Broad. On this particular day, the Mercedes belonging to a member of Columbus City Council was in the parking lot and the Council member could be found hovering about the hallway outside of the meeting room.

Roughly 20 minutes into the meeting, a mid-level manager from the City's Social Service Division arrived bearing a letter of support for the project signed by the hovering Council member and copied to the remaining members of City Council. The manager requested and was granted the opportunity to read the letter aloud. A few short minutes into the words of support communicating City Council's warm regards, extolling the quality of the project's managers, and highlighting the importance of preserving affordable housing, the room dissolved into laughter. The letter named the right owner, but it had the wrong multifamily project --- not even close. The city employee didn't have a clue. The federal representative from HUD's Cleveland office was not amused. For the record, the hovering elected official is at the present not a member of Columbus City Council.

The early 'urban pioneers' who reclaimed residential properties, particularly along Bryden Road, will recall that these homes had been subdivided into four, six, and even eight units to maximize the rental subsi-

dies coming from HUD, ADAMH, and various agencies of State government. About the same time, the Friends of the Homeless was opening its facility on East Main Street.

The circle of supporters for the homeless facility, whose leadership included several individuals who styled themselves members of the 'Communist Workers Party', were also champions of affordable housing, and they thought the South of Main was the perfect place to promote their cause. Within less than a decade, the organization they created, the South of Main Development Corporation, collapsed in the single largest failure in the history of the State of Ohio's Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.

No one ever figured out where all the money went; multiple residual residential properties either vacant or deteriorated or rehabilitated on the cheap can be found on Main Street or scattered about the South of Main to this very day. The creators of the South of Main Development moved on to other jobs and other causes long ago.

The politics of containment provides fertile ground to establish some of the more obvious impediments to residential and economic revitalization: halfway houses, treatment centers, ex-offender re-entry facilities, settlement houses, accommodations for individuals subject to Megan's Law. Such enterprises, because they are publicly subsidized, are generally immune from the principles governing the free market economy.

But the politics of containment can also afford opportunities for City Hall to give the appearance of addressing neighborhood redevelopment concerns when in fact the real public investment for sustainable redevelopment is being targeted for an altogether different geography. Some of the more noteworthy quid pro quo's of this sort in recent memory include Columbus Urban Growth/Four Corners for the Scioto Peninsula and the Lincoln Theatre/King-Lincoln for River South.

Containment districts also provide a serviceable destination for displacing prickly realities that have for whatever reason become inconvenient in more desirable geographies. For example, transporting the downtown's homeless to the Friends of the Homeless on Main Street when Kent Beittel's Open Shelter was shut down along the river front or swapping the Salva-

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State Places Renewed Emphasis on Neighborhood Schools

The Columbus Public Schools is asking taxpayers to approve an operating levy this election season. Voters can also expect to see a second levy request in the near future that would provide the local matching dollars for the second phase of the State-financed school facilities renovation program.

Voter enthusiasm for the dollar requests will likely be tempered by Columbus schools' continuing struggle to improve academic performance. Because so many students fail to meet the State's graduation requirements, come springtime the graduation rate for high school seniors attending CPS is projected to be around 50%.

The academic deficiencies surface long before high school. As many as 59 different schools in the district, most of them elementary and middle schools, and the nearly 20,000 students these neighborhood schools serve have failed to meet State proficiency standards in core academic subjects. As the result, these neighborhood schools are "failing" schools according to the State, and their students are eligible to "opt out" of the Columbus Public Schools by applying for school choice vouchers. At present, Columbus Public has been hemorrhaging students at an average rate of 5,000 annually.

In early 2007, the State Board of Education recognized that neighborhood schools are being short-changed by the State's current funding formula. The State has been allocating its funding on a district by district basis, and it has provided extra funding to school districts whose student populations are disproportionately socially or economically disadvantaged in an effort to close the so-called academic "achievement gap" between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children.

The problem is that the funding awarded proportionately to *school districts* is not being proportionately allocated by school districts to *neighborhood schools*. The resulting disparities in the way school districts distribute their funds has created chronically underperforming schools within school districts. The inequities in the distribution of funds at the local level are especially prejudicial in low-income and high-minority population districts.

By placing a new emphasis on 'building based budgeting,' neighborhood schools will benefit from a child-centered or "weighted student" funding formula that attempts to match the financial requirements of each school building with the specific characteristics of its student body.

The State has recognized that "funding within districts is typically inequitable and is not necessarily going to schools with students in the greatest need." The academic performance of neighborhood schools, particularly chronically underperforming neighborhood schools, can be enhanced if funds are distributed as the State originally intended: the schools with the greatest demonstrated needs receive disproportionately greater financial resources. Extra help to neighborhood schools with the greatest number of disadvantaged children will close the achievement gap, allow students a greater opportunity for academic success, and reduce the overall number of 'failing' schools with the public school system.

The Columbus Board of Education embraced the "weighted student" funding even before the State's
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Board of Education formally adopted it. Shrinking enrollments, low graduation rates, and a long-standing reputation for academic inferiority all combined to push the School Board to recognize the importance of addressing school-related issues one neighborhood at a time.

For neighborhoods, the performance of their schools is as much about economics as it is about equal opportunity and improved educational achievement. The single biggest obstacle to neighborhood revitalization in central city Columbus is the performance or the perceived performance of Columbus Public Schools. Realtors and developers alike understand the problem: it is extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, to attract taxpayers with school-age children to live within Columbus public school boundaries, most especially when these same families have the choice of living in the win-win districts surrounding the CPS boundaries.

But the Columbus Public Schools have failed to implement the School Board's 'neighborhood friendly' funding formula. As the consequence, several Columbus residents have filed a lawsuit against the Columbus Public Schools. Filed late last year, *Brown vs. Columbus Public Schools* alleges that several thousand Columbus school children and multiple neighborhood schools in the district are being harmed by the failure of Columbus Public Schools to implement its own policies. The results are continued deterioration within select neighborhood schools, failure to provide an adequate education to the children in these schools, low test scores, and an unequal opportunity among many neighborhood residents to compete successfully for employment.

The Columbus Public Schools disputes these allegations and argues that it has made progress in implementing weighted student funding and scored several wins in its campaign to improve the performance and the reputation of the school system. The school system has asked the Common Pleas Court to dismiss the case without a hearing. Brown and the other plaintiffs want the case to go forward. They insist that the facts supporting their allegations merit thorough judicial review as well as provide an opportunity for the general public to arrive at its own conclusions about how CPS manages its finances.

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tion Army for a Brewery District development.

Push back from neighborhoods, which often make their arguments based on fairness or equity, typically are greeted with responses that invoke society's responsibility to care for the less fortunate. When neighborhood advocacy becomes too disturbing to the public's business, then responses alleging elitism, gentrification, and even racism are not uncommon. In any instance, the clients who gravitate to the facilities that serve them have time on their hands and very little



Renovated Friends of the Homeless/South of Main property

disposable income in their pockets.

The Compact's Director avers that "policing is a command-control management structure; we need the top brass to sign-off so the officers on the street will be able to roll."

Getting the 'brass' to sign-off could be tricky under any circumstances. But it could be particularly difficult for the Compact which falsely reported to key City Council aides some months ago that CPD endorsed the Compact's fledgling neighborhood camera program in an effort to get the City of Columbus to bear the costs of the program.

The Police Division, which as a matter of practice is not in the business of endorsing any private proposal for Council funds, quickly repudiated the Compact's assertion.

The [Near East Redevelopment Digest](#) is a bi-monthly publication of the MSBA, 923 East Main Street, Columbus, 43205. For information: call 253-2963.

State Sponsors Seminars for Small and Minority Businesses

Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher has announced the Ohio Department of Development's Entrepreneurship and Small Business Division and the Minority Business Enterprise Division have joined forces with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Columbus Urban League to sponsor a series of small business seminars for minority business owners.


The initiative is part of a broader effort to strengthen and to expand business ownership opportunities for minorities. The seminars will be offered from March through November. "We are excited to partner with the Columbus Urban League on these important seminars that support the success of small and minority businesses," said Lt.

Governor Fisher, who also serves as the Director of the Ohio Department of Development. "This partnership demonstrates the many innovative ways we can work together to foster new opportunities by providing more comprehensive services that address the needs of Ohio's minority businesses. The seminar series was developed specifically to address the needs of minority business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. Representatives from Small Business Development Centers, Small Business Administration and the Columbus Urban League will give in-depth overviews of small business programs and services available to assist minority entrepreneurs and business owners.

The seminars will provide information on how to pursue resources including: establishing a business, operating a business, loan programs, free small business counseling, as well as business training. All seminars will be held from 9 a.m. until 12 noon at the Columbus Urban League, 788 Mt. Vernon Avenue in Columbus. *The seminars are free of charge, but registration is required.* Interested small business owners can learn more about the seminar series and they may register by contacting the Columbus Small Business Administration office at (614) 469-6860 ext. 282 or by visiting the website : www.entrepreneurio.org.

The schedule for the seminar series is as follows:

- Understanding Your Credit
Thursday, April 24, 2008
- Access to Capital (Banking Relationships)
Thursday, May 22, 2008
- Legal, Accounting & Insurance
Thursday, June 26, 2008
- Small Business Certification (SBA)
Thursday, July 24, 2008
- Small Business Procurement Opportunities
Thursday, August 28, 2008
- Small Business Franchise Opportunities
Thursday, September 25, 2008
- Small Business Marketing
Thursday, October 23, 2008
- Small Business Match Net
Thursday, November 20, 2008



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Social Inequities Focus of Public Health Awareness Campaign

The Columbus Health Department is using the PBS documentary series *Unnatural Causes* to explore the relationship between social conditions and public health. The initiative began at the end of March with a televised panel discussion that featured Rebecca Nelson from Ohio State, Charleta Tavares of Columbus City Council, Josue Vincente of the Ohio Hispanic Coalition, and Public Health Commissioner, Dr. Theresa Long.

According to Commissioner Long, "Where you are born, live, work and go to school all have a profound effect on overall health and well-being. *Unnatural Causes* and our local public health events will help raise our community's awareness and will begin an important dialogue about health equity."

The Health Department is employing its Community Health Advisory Committees to promote community awareness regarding the environmental and social issues that affect public health. The Health Advisory Committees on the Near East, on the Southside and on the Westside are hosting "Town Meetings" throughout April. Each meeting includes screenings and public discussion about a segment from the *Unnatural Causes* series.

The Town Meeting schedule is:

- Near East Side at the Columbus Health Department building at 5:00 PM on April 9th

- South Side at Barack Recreation Center at 7:00 PM on April 14th
- West Side at Center for Latin Hope at 6:00 PM on April 16th
- Hilltop at J. Ashburn Youth Center at 7:00 PM on April 21st
- Franklinton/Southwest at Mt. Carmel College of Nursing at 6:00 PM on April 22nd
- Westland at Doctor's Hospital at 7:00 PM on April 23rd

All of the meetings are open to the general public. Neighborhood residents who want more information about the meetings should contact Gene Bailey at the Columbus Health Department at 645-0732 or by email at wgbailey@columbus.gov.

"Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?" is a four-part PBS documentary that began airing on WOSU television in March. According to its producers the series attempts to "sound the alarm about America's glaring socio-economic and racial inequities in health." Funding for the local broadcast is provided by the Columbus Medical Association Foundation.

The local effort seeks to attract greater neighborhood involvement in addressing the root causes of America's public health issues.

Block Watch Meetings

Ohio-Parsons Blockwatch
12th Precinct Police Sub-station
950 East Main Street
7:00 PM
2nd Tuesday of each Month

South of Main Blockwatch
12th Precinct Sub-station
950 East Main Street
10:00 AM
1st Saturday of each month

ALL ARE WELCOME

